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COMMITTEE PRINT

TO REDUCE CONFLICTS IN COMMITTEE  
SCHEDULES—A RECOMMENDED  
RULES CHANGE

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REPORT

OF THE  
HOUSE MEMBERS OF THE  
JOINT COMMITTEE ON CONGRESSIONAL  
OPERATIONS



Printed for the use of the Joint Committee on Congressional Operations

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HOUSE MEMBERS OF THE  
JOINT COMMITTEE ON CONGRESSIONAL OPERATIONS

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

Representative JACK BROOKS, Texas, *Chairman*

ROBERT N. GIAIMO, Connecticut

JAMES G. O'HARA, Michigan

JAMES C. CLEVELAND, New Hampshire

JOHN M. ASHBROOK, Ohio

(II)

## LETTERS OF TRANSMITTAL

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THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON CONGRESSIONAL OPERATIONS,  
*September 27, 1976.*

THE HONORABLE CARL ALBERT,  
*Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives,*  
*The Capitol, Washington, D.C.*

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to section 206, of the Committee Reform Amendments of 1974 (H. Res. 988), the House Members of the Joint Committee on Congressional Operations recommend unanimously that clause 2(b) of Rule XI of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives which deals with meetings of the standing committees of the House be amended in accord with the attached proposed Resolution and accompanying Report, to reduce substantially the number of scheduled conflicts of committee and subcommittee meetings at which a quorum is essential.

Sincerely,

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JACK BROOKS, *Chairman.*

THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON CONGRESSIONAL OPERATIONS,  
*September 27, 1976.*

HON. RAY J. MADDEN,  
*Chairman, Committee on Rules,*  
*The Capitol, Washington, D.C.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: In accordance with our mandate under section 206, of the Committee Reform Amendments of 1974 (H. Res. 988), the House Members of the Joint Committee on Congressional Operations recommend unanimously that clause 2(b) of Rule XI of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives which deals with meetings of the standing committees of the House be amended in accord with the attached proposed Resolution and accompanying Report, to reduce substantially the number of scheduled conflicts of committee and subcommittee meetings at which a quorum is essential.

I am forwarding this Report for consideration by the Rules Committee. We are hopeful that you will have opportunity to consider the Resolution as soon as the committee schedule permits.

Sincerely,

JACK BROOKS, *Chairman.*



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## TO REDUCE CONFLICTS IN COMMITTEE SCHEDULES— A RECOMMENDED RULES CHANGE

The House Members of the Joint Committee on Congressional Operations recommend that clause 2(b) of Rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives be amended so as to reduce substantially the incidence of conflicts in the scheduling of meetings and hearings by the standing committees and subcommittees of the House.

The recommendation provides that the nonexclusive committees (excepting the Committees on Appropriations, Rules, and Ways and Means) be divided into two groups, each of which would be precluded from meeting on 2 days of each month. All committees and subcommittees would be free to meet on any or all other days of the month. This would enable all committees to schedule meetings, at which the presence of a quorum was essential for the conduct of business, at least twice a month with maximum assurance that most Members would have no conflicting committee or subcommittee meeting on their schedules.

### AUTHORITY

Under part 1 of Title IV of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970, the Joint Committee on Congressional Operations is responsible for studying the organization and operations of the Congress and recommending improvements. More specifically, section 206 of the Committee Reform Amendments of 1974 (H. Res. 988), later enacted into public law, directs the House Members of the Joint Committee to conduct a continuing study of the jurisdictions and workloads of the standing committees of the House and to recommend appropriate changes.

### BACKGROUND

Members of the House have expressed growing concern in recent years at the increasing frequency of conflicts in the scheduling of meetings and hearings of the committees and subcommittees to which they are assigned. Such conflicts create difficulties for committees and subcommittees in obtaining and holding quorums necessary for the conduct of their business and for Members in arranging to attend two or more meetings scheduled for the same time.

The staff of the former Select Committee on Committees, in the course of its study of House committee jurisdictions and operations, compiled detailed statistics with respect to the occurrence of committee scheduling conflicts and their impact on individual Members during the 1st session of the 93d Congress.

Analysis of this data—which does not include meetings of joint committees, select committees, or commissions—reveals the magnitude of the problem. Between January 4, 1973 and December 20, 1973, some 3,368 committee and subcommittee meetings were scheduled in the House on 199 different days, an average of 17 meetings per day.



For Members, collectively, these meetings occasioned 9,230 instances of conflict in which two or more committees or subcommittees on which they served were meeting simultaneously. In 1,080 instances, Members were scheduled to attend three meetings during the same time period; in 88 cases, Members were expected to attend four meetings at the same time; and on four occasions, Members faced a schedule of five concurrent committee/subcommittee meetings.

These figures, of course, do not tell the whole story. They do not account for conflicts which may have resulted from morning meetings extended into the afternoon—a not infrequent experience. Nor do they reveal the number of meetings canceled for lack of quorums or the occasions on which meetings could not be scheduled because of conflicts with previously scheduled meetings. In the judgment of House Members of the Joint Committee, however, the data are more than adequate to confirm the widespread observations of Members that committee scheduling conflicts are so frequent and so frustrating as to require corrective action at the earliest opportunity.

### RECOMMENDED RESOLUTION

Since there is so little prospect of affecting directly in the near future the basic causes of scheduling conflicts—the increased legislative and oversight workloads of most committees and the proliferation of subcommittees—the greatest potential for immediate results appears to exist in more effective utilization of time in seeking to alleviate scheduling conflicts. In the absence of a House-wide, computer-assisted system for scheduling all committee and subcommittee meetings, which would encourage the scheduling of meetings at times of maximum membership availability, conflicts can be reduced most effectively by blocking out limited periods of time in which those committees with the least membership overlap have the exclusive right to meet.

House Members of the Joint Committee propose—and have drafted a House Resolution to implement this proposal—that:

(1) the standing committees of the House (excluding Appropriations, Rules, Ways and Means) be divided into two groups, each composed of committees on which there is minimum duplication of membership;

(2) for each group of committees, 2 days a month—the second Tuesday and the fourth Thursday, or the second Thursday and fourth Tuesday—be designated on which those committees would be prohibited from meeting, thereby allowing the other group relatively unconflicting access to their memberships;

(3) the Committee on the Budget be included in both groups of committees in view of the fact that assignments to the Budget Committee for most of its Members represent an additional—often a third—committee assignment;

(4) all committees and their subcommittees be entitled to meet on any and all days not specifically prohibited.

One group of committees would consist of: Agriculture, Armed Services, Banking, Currency and Housing, Budget, Education and Labor, International Relations, Interstate and Foreign Commerce, Judiciary, and Public Works and Transportation.



The other group would include: Budget, District of Columbia, Government Operations, House Administration, Interior and Insular Affairs, Merchant Marine and Fisheries, Post Office and Civil Service, Science and Technology, Small Business, Standards of Official Conduct, and Veterans' Affairs.

The Committees on Appropriations, Rules, and Ways and Means would not be included in either group and would not be restricted in any way in terms of scheduling committee or subcommittee meetings since traditionally Members of these committees serve on no other, except for Members appointed for short terms on the Budget Committee.

The proposed resolution would amend clause 2(b) of Rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives.

On the basis of committee assignments in the 94th Congress, this proposal would directly affect approximately 238 Members who serve on committees in both groups. One hundred and sixty-one Members who serve on only one committee (excluding the Budget Committee) would be indirectly benefitted by virtue of the greater assurance that their committees would be able to obtain quorums on specified days and by the certainty that on 2 days no committee meetings could be scheduled. Thirty-one Members serve on two committees in the same group and, thus, would not benefit directly from the proposed rules change.

Overall, therefore, substantial relief would be provided for most Members of the House—and for the committees on which they serve—by adoption of this proposal. Scheduling conflicts would be ameliorated. Committees would have increased assurance that meetings could be scheduled, well in advance, at which quorums were necessary for the conduct of business. The effectiveness of the legislative process would be enhanced, and the orderly conduct of committee business would be improved.

#### TEXT OF RESOLUTION

Following is the text of the resolution proposed to implement the rules change described above. The resolution has been endorsed unanimously by the five House Members of the Joint Committee.

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To amend the House Rules for the purpose of assisting in the reduction of the number of committees meeting on certain days of each month.

*Resolved, That the first sentence of clause 2(b) of Rule XI of the House of Representatives is amended by inserting the following immediately before the period at the end thereof: “; except that neither the full Committee on Agriculture, the Committee on Armed Services, the Committee on Banking, Currency and Housing, the Committee on the Budget, the Committee on Education and Labor, the Committee on International Relations, the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, the Committee on the Judiciary and the Committee on Public Works nor any Sub-Committee of the foregoing may meet on either the second Tuesday or the fourth Thursday of each month, and*

neither the full Committee on the Budget, the Committee on the District of Columbia, the Committee on Government Operations, the Committee on House Administration, the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, the Committee on Science and Technology, the Committee on Small Business, the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, nor any Sub-Committee of the foregoing may meet on either the second Thursday or the fourth Tuesday of each month".



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